



**U.S. Department of Justice**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**DEFENDANT INDICTED IN INTERNATIONAL SEX TOURISM CASE**

Karin J. Immergut, United States Attorney for the District of Oregon, Christopher A. Wray, Assistant Attorney General, Criminal Division, U.S. Department of Justice, and Leigh Winchell, Special Agent-in-Charge for Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Oregon and Washington announced today that a federal grand jury in Portland, Oregon has returned a seven-count indictment charging an Oregon man, Lester Christian Weber, with international travel to engage in sexual acts with a minor, and the transport and possession of child pornography. Mr. Weber was arraigned today in Federal District Court in Portland, Oregon. Mr. Weber was originally arrested on December 3, 2004, and has remained in custody since that date.

The indictment charges Mr. Weber with using the internet to entice a minor to engage in sexual acts in violation of Title 18 U.S.C. Section 2422(b); international travel with the intent to engage in sexual acts with a minor in violation of Title 18 U.S.C. Section 2423(c); aggravated sexual abuse in violation of Title 18 U.S.C. Section 2241(c), possession of child pornography in violation of Title 18 U.S.C. Sections 2252A(a)(5)(B) and 2252A(b)(2), and transportation of child pornography in violation of Title 18 U.S.C. Sections 2252A(a)(1) and (b)(1).

The charges relating to international travel, enticement and transportation of child pornography are being brought under the provisions of the recently enacted PROTECT Act, which substantially strengthened federal laws against predatory crimes and others which involve the exploitation of children. Title 18 U.S.C. Section 2423(c) makes it a federal crime to engage in or attempt to engage in travel outside of the United States where the primary intent is to engage in a sexual relationship with an individual under the age of 16. Charges relating to the enticement of a minor and the transportation of child pornography each have mandatory minimum sentences of 60 months, as required by the PROTECT Act.

The indictment alleges that the defendant knowingly traveled between January 1, 2004 and December 1, 2004 from the State of Oregon to the country of Kenya where he knowingly engaged in a sexual act with two victims who had not attained the age of 12 years. The defendant is also alleged to have attempted, on or about December 3, 2004, to travel from the State of Oregon to the country of Kenya for the purpose of engaging in an illicit sexual act with another person.

In January 2004, ICE agents from Portland traveled to Nairobi, where working

closely with the Kenyan National Police, they conducted several interviews and served a search warrant as part of the investigation.

Weber faces up to life imprisonment for each count of the aggravated sexual abuse charges, up to thirty years imprisonment for the enticement charge, up to thirty years imprisonment each charge of traveling internationally and attempting to travel internationally to engage in an illicit sexual act, up to five years imprisonment for the possession of child pornography charge, and up to twenty years imprisonment for transporting child pornography. If convicted, the defendant faces a term of supervised release after imprisonment of up to life and also faces a possible fine of up to \$250,000 for each count of conviction. In addition, the government is seeking the forfeiture of the child pornography and related computer equipment used in case.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Gregory R. Nyhus of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Oregon, and Trial Attorney Steve Grocki of the Department of Justice Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section. The case was investigated by Special Agent Dan Baldridge and others of the Portland Office of the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The investigation that led to yesterday's indictment is part of Operation Predator, a nationwide ICE initiative to protect children from sexual predators, including those who travel overseas for sex with minors, Internet child pornographers, criminal alien sex offenders, and child sex traffickers.

ICE encourages the reporting of suspected child predators and any suspicious activity through its toll-free hotline at 1-866-DHS-2ICE. This hotline is staffed around the clock by investigators. Suspected child sexual exploitation or missing children may be reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, an Operation Predator partner, at 1-800-843-5678 or <http://www.cybertipline.com>.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is entitled to fair trial in which it will be the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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